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WE NAME THE BEST GAMES EVER

What's the best:
- ☐ Shoot 'Em Up
- ☐ Combat Game
- ☐ Platform Game
- ☐ Flight Sim
- ☐ Sports Sim
- ☐ Arcade Adventure
- ☐ Racing Sim
- ☐ Cheapo
- ☐ Adventure

The toughest team of reviewers in the business name 'em.

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This seemed like a good idea when we started and a pretty simple one at that. Pick out the best games and categorise them suitably. So we scribbled down a few ideas in the pub and went back to the office satisfied. Boy did we blow it!

The closer we looked at it the harder it became. Extra sections were added rapidly and all kinds of horrible difficulties in categorising things cropped up. How would you describe Fist II, Hacker, or Little Computer People? Games don't always fit perfect, neat little pigeon holes (thank God).

SUPERSTARS isn't intended primarily as a guide (although you can use it as such) because it's just not comprehensive enough. We'd need to write a book for that (anyone listening out there?) Treat it as more of a C.U. REVIEWER'S CHOICE than a bible.

We picked nine of the most important categories that games seem to fall into. That took a bit of doing. The ones you are about to read include some games that incorperate many other aspects. Purists among you will probably howl at finding ELITE and MERCENARY described as arcade adventures, but how else do you fit them in? Trading games? Now name nine other good ones. Tough isn't it?

So you've got to accept there are omissions here. Ball bearing games for example — we nearly classed them as arcade adventures as well, but then decided to give them a miss, not because we don't like them or we don't think there are any good versions, but simply because we didn't have the space.

So no more apologies, you'll have to accept our arbitrary decisions on categories. You're perfectly welcome, of course, to disagree with our choices and chart placings of the games — and if you do then write in and tell us about it as well. But at least we've had our say and you'll understand just what turns us on every time we give a game a Screen Star, or more importantly a Superstar, which from now on will be awarded to games which really make the earth move.

Hopefully the whole booklet will be out of date in six months, and we won't care because that'll mean there's some excellent new games on the way! Now if you'll excuse us we've got a collective headache and we'd like to lie down for a while...

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6 Combat Games

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12 Sports Sims

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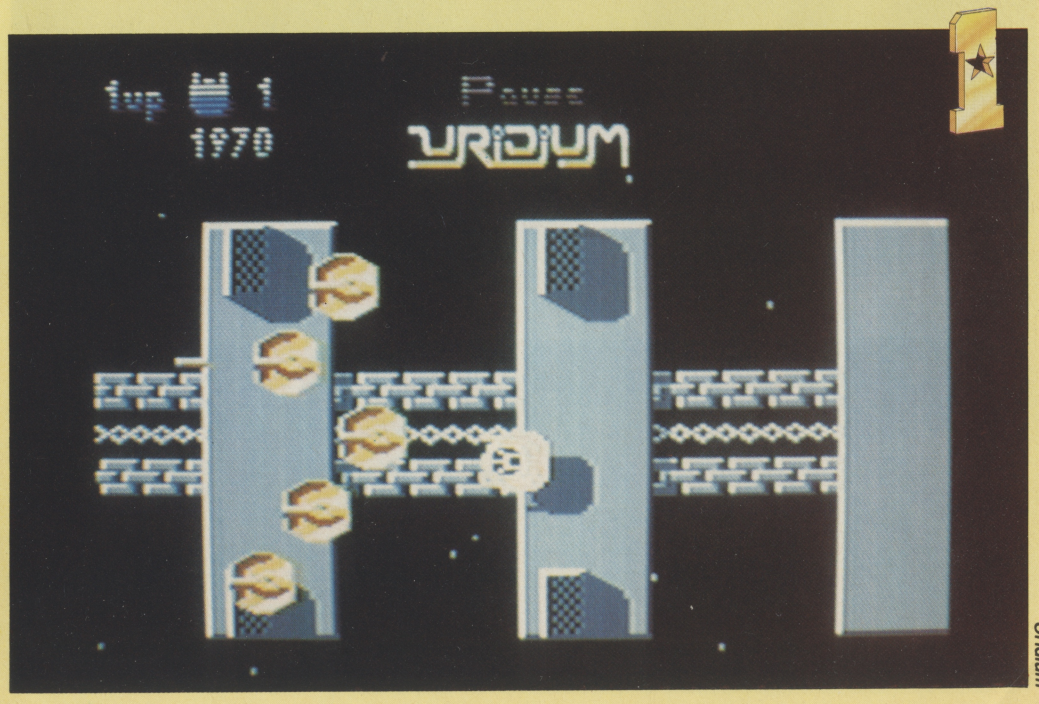
☐EDITED BY: **Mike Pattenden** ☐ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: **Eugene Lacey, Keith Cambell** ☐DESIGN: **Graphic Impressions**

SHOOT 'EM UPS

Probably the most popular form of game at home or in the arcades is the shoot 'em up. This is the kind of video game which allows you to indulge the worst aspects of your nature. Blow away everything in sight. Wipe out anything that moves and often anything that won't. Great jets of laser fire, bolts of photon torpedos, flamethrowers, rockets, bullets, knives, it doesn't matter as long as plenty of the enemy get wasted in the process. It's all hand-to-eye co-ordination, there's no real thinking involved, just speed of reactions and fast accurate shooting.

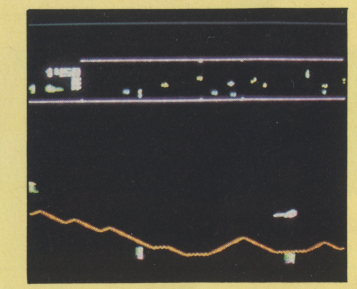
The shoot 'em up never really waned in popularity, not even when arcade adventures or icons were the flavour-of-the-month. There were always a few knocking around. Until this year that is, when we went into full scale blast mania. Dozens of finger twitching games have appeared, many clones, but most of them straight from the arcades. If you agree with this top ten it'll be a miracle, but most of them deserve a place on the roll-of-honour.



Uridium

When you consider it all began with Space Invaders it's pretty ridiculous that there's never been a half-decent version of that available. Maybe though that's because people were concentrating on the new breed of arcade games when the 64 appeared. That's why one of our top shoot 'em ups comes from this era — and that's going back a bit. When Defender was still the fast action game to play there were a number of clones appearing. Best of all, and still pretty damn hot, is Alligata's version, GUARDIAN. It offers just about everything the coin-op did.

You couldn't help but notice the debt DROPZONE owed Defender as well. Programmer Archer Maclean took that and mixed it with Star Gate to produce a bluringly fast balster. The sparks from the explosions looked as if they could burn your cataracts out, and it seemed as if there was never a moment's peace from one nasty spare or another as you tried to lift the human spheres to safety.

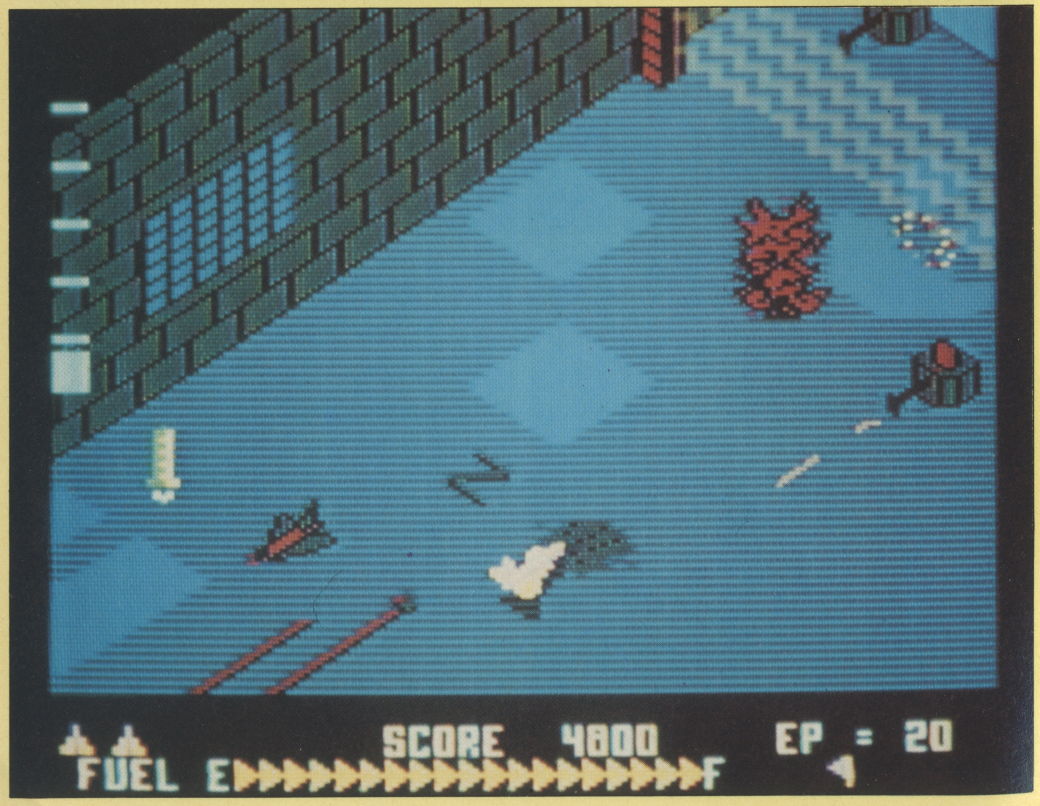


It's extreme toughness isn't off-putting. A classic.

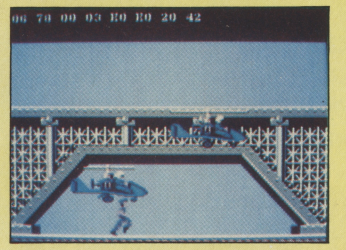
You can't really sit and write something about shoot 'em ups and Defender without mentioning Jeff Minter. From the moment he saw that game Llamasoft's hippie boss spewed out games inspired by the horizontally scrolling raster blaster and fashioned by his own, erm, animal-fixated imagination. There's a whole feast of them for trigger happy gamers. If you like his style you can choose from Mutant Camels, Mama Llama, Metagallactic Llamas, Iridis Alfa and Laserzone but our favourite is BATALYX for combining all the best aspects of the others as six games rolled into one. Colour, speed, playability and execution they're all there.

Most of the games in this section are either conversions or rip-offs from the arcades and since we're dipping back in time for some of these we've got to mention ZAXXON. The Sega game has been superceded in many ways since, but Datasoft's conversion was faithful and testing (well it was testing if you didn't use the cheat, and we don't need that do we?) Basically it was the 3D diagonal scrolling and elevated view that made it so appealing.

Martech's CRAZY COMETS was also inspired by the arcades. Based on Tito's Gyruss machine it pitches you into the stars to go berserk among myriad forms of galactic matter running wildly out of control. Spectacular, frenetic and pretty all at the same time.



Since then people have stopped looking to the arcades simply for inspiration and gone the whole hog with licensed conversions by the dozen. This trend gathered pace with two of the bigger conversions of this year. Ocean's version of GREEN BERET was eagerly awaited and no-one was disappointed. They did a great job cramming much of the coin-op onto the 64 with little apparent loss of playabiity. Excellent sound effects, realistic, colourful backgrounds, smooth scrolling and great animation were the hallmarks of an excellent all-round game that's likely to stay high in anyone's chart for a long time to come.



Two worthy attempts to break your wrist and put blisters on your joystick finger came from Elite. The first, GHOSTS AND GOBLINS was as eagerly awaited as Green Beret. Although it asked you to find a route to the end it required little mapping or real thought to play and can only really be described as a shoot 'em up. It was a popular choice among arcade fans and a faithful conversion pleased all but a few.

Less polished and impressive (just like the arcade machine in this respect) was their version of 1942, the vertical shoot 'em up was based on fighting off different flight patterns. It had that degree of toughness and playability that meant you just couldn't put it down once you got stuck into it.

One game though wasn't immediately recognisable as an arcade conversion. Let's just say it was another of those titles inspired by what was in the arcades, that a talented programmer, Andrew Braybrook, took and fashioned into his own game. URIDIUM was Starforce 7 flipped on its side and adapted to the home computer. Superb slick scrolling, fast blasting, a touch of thought needed as you played and plenty of stamina. For its instant playability and its enduring entertainment we rate this as the best so far.

A game like Uridium spawns plenty of clones itself — most of them bad. One that wasn't was SANXION, a promising start from a new software house, Thalamus. With games like this and their forthcoming Delta and FTL's Lightforce a new generation of sophisticated blasting is already on the way.

Last year, 1986 was the Year of the Shoot 'Em Up, but it's not over. Blasting is likely to continue well into next year with the conversions of Space Harrier, Xevious and Terra Cresta just being completed. There'll be no rest for the wicos. The battle's only just begun!

C16 AND PLUS/4

Naturally there's a fair selection of shoot 'em ups for these machines including a fair share of the arcade conversions. REACH FOR THE SKY was an average rip-off of 1942, whilst Elite's Commando proved rather easy meat for seasoned gamers when it appeared on the C16.

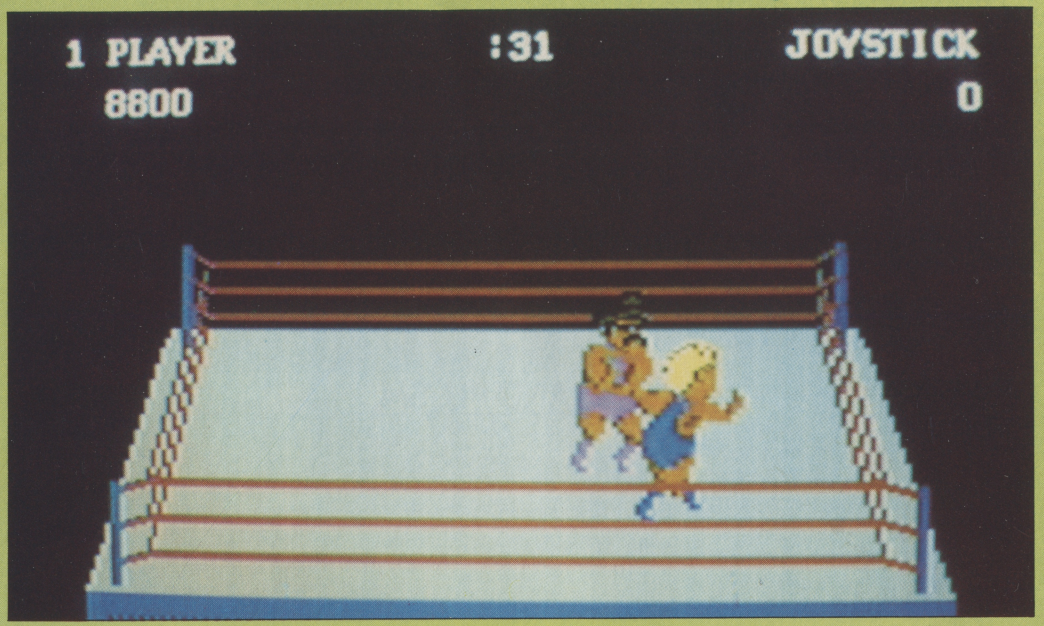
The old classics have appeared naturally enough, though it took Jeff Minter long enough to produce a version of Laserzone. Anirog SKRAMBLE meanwhile is a pretty useful rendition of the old favourite, whilst Anco have successfully cloned Green Beret in BRIDGEHEAD and Tynesoft have put together a very useful version of Alligata's Commando rip-off WHO DARES WINS II. It's all pretty average stuff for trigger happy gamers but I think this is one category we definitely will see a major improvement in this year.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR
1	URIDIUM	Hewson Consultants	March 86	★
	Current state of the art blasing. A new version in the shops now.			
2	Dropzone	US Gold	Aug 85	
	The ultimate Defender style game. Exhausting balsting. Tough, durable.			
3	Green Beret	Ocean	July 86	★
	A lesson in arcade conversions. Frenetic, entertaining and classy.			
4	Guardian	Alligata	n/a	
	So old, but still such good unpretentious fun. Only available on compilation now.			
5	Crazy Comets	Martech	Dec 85	
	Nerve wracking blasting among the cosmos and a great soundtrack.			
6	Ghosts 'n' Goblins	Elite	July 86	★
	A more fairy tale/nightmare scenario with some strategy.			
7	Batalyx	Llamasoft	Nov 85	
	Combines just about every element of Jeff Minter's games.			
8	1942	Elite	Nov 86	★
	Not a dream to watch, but certainly a nightmare to play. Tough and addictive.			
9	Zaxxon	US Gold	Dec 85	★
	Responsive shoot 'em up with 3D graphics and diagonal scrolling. Set the pace for shoot em 'ups.			
10	Sanxion	Thalamus	Nov 86	
	By the skin of its teeth. First of a new generation — almost certainly won't be in anyones top ten in six months time.			

COMBAT GAMES

This category includes just about anything which involves doing physical damage to someone or something without any severe overworking of the old grey matter. The combat game or beat 'em up, is all down to timing and skill as you attempt to make contact with your adversary using fists, feet or weapons.

The best beat 'em ups give you an innate sense of satisfaction when you overcome an opponent. They make you walk tall, act mean and talk tough. That's because they give you the impression you're responsible for the damage inflicted on your opponent. It's all macho manipulation and role play but it's good fun and no more violent than 'Tom and Jerry.'

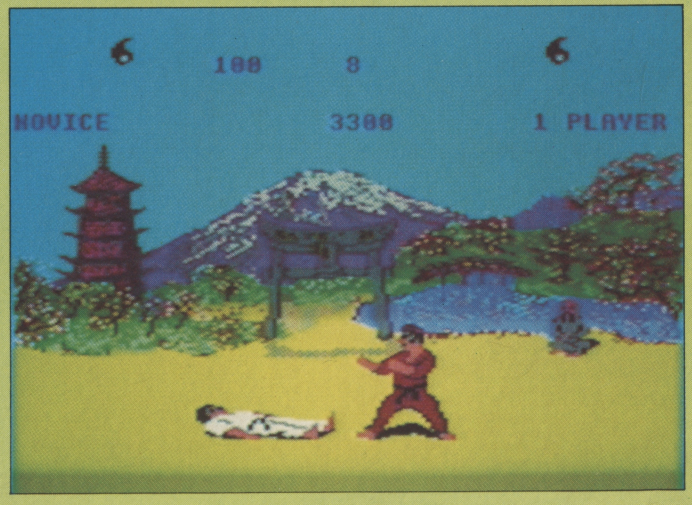


If you rule out Bruce Lee as a platform game you have to look to Melbourne House's epic WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST as the start of the whole thing. It really is the godfather of combat games and in some respects it's still the best. Nothing like it had ever appeared on the 64. It took its inspiration from the 'Karate Champ' arcade machine and in many ways improved it in terms of speed and sound — an achievement in itself. FIST offered the player large sprites, neat, colourful graphics and sixteen possible moves. You were in total control of this baby.

Fist caused a massive stir, our offices went mad with people queuing up to play it and taking the computer home at the weekends. Subsequently the game went on to sell over a quarter of a million and spawn lots of clones. Most of them awful — with one exception. INTERNATIONAL KARATE, which barely made any attempt to change the style or format of the game when it was released a year later. What it did do was enhance just about every element of the Melbourne House game. It was basically much faster, had better sound and spot effects (courtesy Rob Hubbard) and all round gameplay. It was, deep breath, big cliche — state-of-the-art. That's why it's our top toughie. Numero uno.

Melbourne House meanwhile, had already continued their line of innovation with ROCK AND WRESTLE, a grunt and grapple game which tried to take the FIST gameplay one further. The graphic effect was 3D, enabling you to stalk the ring and even stand on the ropes. They went for a massive twenty-two moves — more skill and more thought was needed — but more playable it wasn't. No-one's tried to do anything as bold since which is a pity. We live in hope. Epyx's Championship Wrestling has picked up the theme and turned in a very playable game indeed.

The boxing games that appeared just over a year ago constitute a separate area of beat 'em ups. These took their inspiration from the arcades (where else?) which were full of machines like 'Rocky' and 'Super Puncher' at the time. Of these the most innovative was Elite's FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING which copied



Super Puncher and gave us a wire framed Frank Bruno. Activision's BARRY McGUIGAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING was really an options game whilst US Gold's FIGHT NIGHT was quite playable, but pretty tough.

The Fist clones keep coming from the dire cheapos like Ninja Master to the slick representations like UCHI MATA which opted for judo instead of karate for a spot of orginality. However, two arcade machine conversions figure highly in our chart: US Gold's KUNG FU MASTER and Ocean's YIE AR KUNG FU (I and II). Both were pretty good representations of the arcade machine and involve you fighting opponent after opponent. In YIE AR II you walk across the screen-like KUNG FU MASTER — the sprites are larger and more distinct but both games have a limited amount of moves.

Melbourne House were again at the forefront with games which armed you with weapons when they released FIGHTING WARRIOR. The number of fighting moves attempted to mirror FIST'S options, but the game wasn't a success. Gremlin's WAY OF THE TIGER was an improvement but not as good as its Spectrum predecessor, whilst KNIGHT GAMES was a sort of mediaeval sports sim with its shooting options being the most playable. The well-animated sword and axe fighting was a little too hit-the-fire-button-and-hope to be enduringly playable. And the less said about Legend of Kage the better.

KARATEKA brought an arcade adventure approach to the genre and succeeded. It takes some getting use to this one and in fact plays as if it's running in slow-mo. The other approach to this is FIST II, of course, which not only has a new fighting tournament on the second side but offers a mappable playing area. We like it a lot, despite the bugs, and although it falls between two categories we rate it as another step forward.

Considering the combat game is such a popular genre it's surprising how poor quality much of it is. Games like THAI BOXING which look graphically appealing are often horribly flawed in some way, in this case by simply being too easy. We've already dismissed the infamous Ninja Master as a dreadful cheapo, but what can be said in mitigation of games like AMAZON WOMEN, which was so dire US Gold didn't even dare send us a review copy? No more lousy clones.

The future will no doubt spawn more martial arts games. Everyone's eagerly awaiting System 3's THE LAST NINJA, which sounds like a FIST II clone and will probably take as long to appear.

Will it take another Melbourne House-type prodigy to spur games onto greater things — more control, more moves? Grasshopper, we are only limited by our imagination and programming skill...

C16 AND PLUS/4

Martial arts mania couldn't help but transfer itself to the C16 and Plus/4 but the transposition hasn't been too happy, it probably asks a bit too much of the machine's memory and lack of sprites, which makes decent animation difficult. Best of the bunch really has to be FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING from Elite, which managed nice large moving figures but still isn't that playable. Otherwise you have to look to Endurance Games' version of INTERNATIONAL KARATE which is graphically good again, has all the moves, but is tremendously easy.

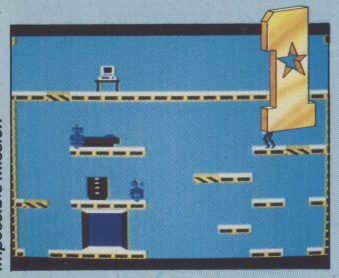
Worth a look too is Imagine's YIE AR conversion which was graphically fine but sadly bugged. The only other games of this kind we can think of is KUNG FU KID from Gremlin and THAI BOXING which even embarassed Anco.

It's a fair bet that someone else is going to try again for these two computers, so we just better hope they do better than this lot, because they certainly can't to any worse. Can they?

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	International Karate *Took Fist and enhanced just about every aspect.*	System 3	June 86	
2	Way of the Exploding Fist *The first, the inspiration and still hugely entertaining.*	Melbourne House	July 85	★
3	Fist II — The Legend Continues *The next step. Bugged but impressive and absorbing.*	Melbourne House	Nov 86	★
4	Karateka *Classy and atmospheric but flawed on cassette by loading problem.*	Ariolasoft	Nov 86	
5	Yie Ar Kung Fu II *An improved sequel. More to do but not enough moves to grab you for long.*	Imagine	Dec 86	
6	Kung Fu Master *Successful conversion with limited moves but plenty of opponents.*	US Gold	Mar 86	
7	Rock and Wrestle *Flawed but ambitious attempt to take the genre one step further.*	Melbourne House	Feb 86	★
8	Uchi Mata *A new angle, judo. Technically proficient, accurate representation.*	Martech	Nov 86	
9	Way of the Tiger *Combat game with weapons — was a touch repetitive, best of its kind.*	Gremlin	Aug 86	
10	Frank Bruno's Boxing *Well, Harry, best of the boxing games, fiddley loading and few moves though.*	Elite	Oct 85	

PLATFORMS

Late '84 and early '85 saw the games business totally dominated by the platform game. Every software house in the land had jumped (sic) on the bandwagon. Some truly brilliant inventive games came out of what appears to be a limited style.



Impossible Mission

The sad thing about the platform game is that it looks like becoming rapidly extinct.

At the beginning of '85 platform games were the height of good gaming taste. Software houses moved sheep-like into development of ever more complexes platforms.

The early Kong clones featured a simple vertical climb. Once you got to the top of one screen and found yourself at the bottom of the next.

JET SET WILLY changed all this by adding movement in three other directions. It now became necessary to map the playing area as they became even bigger. You needed to start collecting things as you travelled — using them on certain screens.

Apart from the odd cheapo not much seems to have happened this year. It was a classic, but inevitable case of overkill. It's more than sad when you consider this category boasts what we consider to be just about the best game of all time — IMPOSSIBLE MISSION.

Don't write off the platform game yet. After all, who would have thought that shoot 'em ups would have dominated the charts this year?

C16 AND PLUS/4

Things went full circle with the release of the C16 and Plus/4. The first releases all seemed to be conversions of old 64 platforms games. Though it's only in the last few months that a truely useful version of any has appeared. Gremlin did a great job converting MONTY ON THE RUN. They packed just about everything including some very sweet and colourful graphics. Software Project's didn't do quite such a good job on MANIC MINER, but it's still head and shoulders above most of the lousy ladder fare that blights much of the C16 software list like Jet Set Willy.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	Impossible Mission *Not only the best platform game this is the **Best Game Ever Released.** Best sounds effects, best graphics, an interesting intellectual challenge. Simply superb.*	Epyx	April 85	★
2	Monty on the Run *Much more than a great Rob Hubbard soundtrack. Really tough screens — but fast moving with lifts and secret passages. A platform gamers platform game.*	Gremlin Graphics	Oct 85	
3	Cauldon II *Pushed the platform game a stage further. More atmosphere and was graphically more convincing.*	Palace Software	June 86	
4	Manic Miner *Introduced totally over the top nasties like man-eating toilets, and mutant telephones.*	Bug Byte	Sept 84	
5	Dynamite Dan *Scores zero for originality — but if you like your platform games your collection is not complete without this one.*	Mirrorsoft	Dec 85	
6	Blagger *Alligata came up with the original idea of a cat burglar to lift this out of the realms of mediocrity. Collect the keys to open the safes and away with the dosh.*	Alligata		
7	Frak *Brought cartoon style-animation to the platform game for the first time.*	Statesoft	March 85	
8	Hard Hat Mack *Only the second American game in the line-up. It offered some neat tricks like a cannon fire for Mac, a see-saw jump and was very tough.*			
9	Bounty Bob Strikes Back *Sequel to Miner 2049'er. Combined of collecting pills and standard platform fare.*	US Gold	June 85	
10	Hunchback II *Characterised by viscious nasties trying to stick their spears up your, er, botty.*	Ocean	Feb 86	

FLIGHT SIMS

Since they first appeared in an attempt to provide the thrills of real life flight simulations video game sims have been getting more and more sophisticated. Not quite as popular in the UK as they are in the States where you quite often see flight sims topping the charts. CU takes flight sims very seriously — just like you do. That's why we have a Concorde pilot, Captain John Hutchinson, reviewing these games for us. Here is our pick of the best.

'Wild' Bill Steeley of Microprose tells a good story about how he and an ex-fighter pilot 'buddy' were pumping quarters into a primitive coin-op flight sim when his friend says "I could do that." "If you can do that on a home comptuer I can sell it," says Steeley and Microprose was born.

You have to start off by talking about Microprose in any discussion of flight sims. Glance at the top ten and you will notice that this company have the top three games. Quite simply Microprose pioneered simulated flight on home computers.

'Wild' Bill's boys are the purists of the flight simulation. They choose an aircraft — a Cessna 172 in Solo Flight or a BD-5J Acrobatics Jet in Acro Jet for example — and then attempt to represent it as accurately as possible on the 64.

Solo Flight II

They pride themselves on the authenticity of the simulation — how near it is to the real thing. This is why when they make comparisons with other simulations — F15 Strike Eagle versus Fighter Pilot, for example. They will boast the number of F15-authentic features their game has over the Digital Integration one.

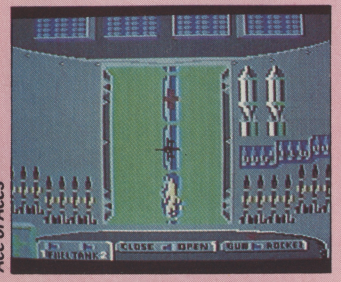
Digital didn't set out to produce a straight simulation — Fighter Pilot blends an element of arcade game with the simulation, but this illustrates the clear division that has now happened in the flight simulation business.

There are two distinct types, the arcade style best represented by games like ACE OF ACES and Dambusters.

These games feature multi-screen control over the aircraft. A screen for dropping the bombs in Dambusters, or a dramatic view across the wing in Ace of Aces for the flight engineers' role.

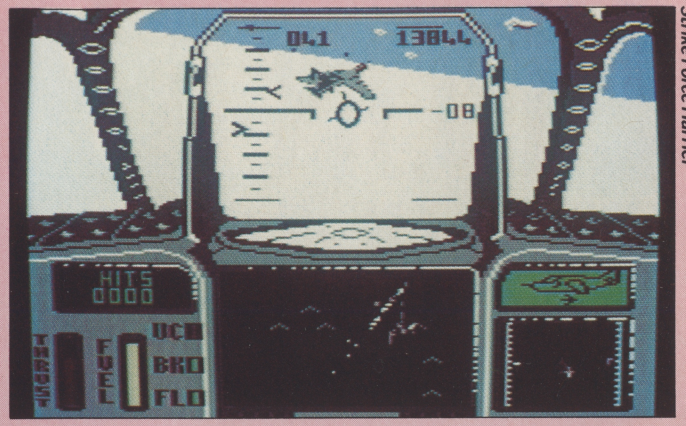
As we have noted the Microprose games are the best examples of traditional flight simulation. Game like SOLO FLIGHT II are characterised by a one screen cockpit view. The controls are as authentic as they can be and you have to master them in the same way as you would the instruments in the real thing.

You really learn about the airplanes in a Microprose sim. F15 Strike Eagle for example has a 40 page booklet telling you all about the U.S.A.F. fighter.



Ace of Aces

There is a third and newer type of flight sim which complicates matters even further. The best example of this is Mirrorsoft's STRIKE FORCE HARRIER. This provides as near a simulation as possible but then goes and adds several ficticious instruments that don't really exist. It also combines and arcade game challenge. I would classify this new type of game as Arcade Simulation. I get the feeling we are going to see a lot of these games in the near future.



Strike Force Harrier

'87 looks like being an exciting year for flight sims. We know about two excellent sims under development by Micropose and Digital Integration. Both are chopper combat games. Keep watching this space for a head-to-head review as soon as we get our hands on them. Happy flying.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR
1	Solo Flight II	Microprose	June 86	
	Simply the best. Has wonderful graphics, speech, and several difficulty levels as you learn to master the Cessna 172.			
2	F15 Strike Eagle	Microprose	Mar 85	
	So authentic The Russian Embassy in New York dispatched an aid to buy a supply of them from the Big Apple's leading toy shop. The nearest you are going to get to flying a supersonic jet fighter.			
3	Acro Jet	Microprose	July 86	
	The flight simmers flight sim. Acrobatics in a manoeuverable jet. Sheer flying on your 64.			
4	Strike Force Harrier	Mirrorsoft	Nov 86	
	Best combination of pure game and flight sim yet. Cap'n John loved it and he's used to real life flying.			
5	Fighter Pilot	Digital Integration	Jan 85	★
	Hot Shot Pattenden's fave flight sim. Its combat mode more than makes up for its lack of authenticity as an advanced military fighter.			
6	Ace of Aces	US Gold	Dec 86	★
	Looks like a follow up to Dam Busters but with greater depth of gameplay and graphics.			
7	Ace	Cascade	Dec 85	
	A very decent flight sim for the C16 and the 64.			
8	Spitfire 40	Mirrorsoft		
	The romantic World War II fighter brought home, brilliantly to the 64.			
9	Super Huey II	US Gold	Dec 86	
	Cap'n John didn't go overboard but it remains the best chopper sim yet.			
10	Dam Busters	US Gold	March 85	★
	The first sim to involve arcade style play — brilliantly done too.			

SPORTS SIMS

It has to be said that gaming isn't the most healthy pastime you can indulge in. Shut indoors in dim light, armchair-bound, sleeping short fitful hours with a subconscious mind full of flaming ships and scrolling backgrounds, you aren't exactly going to become Adonis or Venus. In fact it's all pretty unhealthy.

So it's quite ironic that so many games offer sporting scenarios. This goes right back to the early consoles as well. Those dated, horrible units that offered you monchromatic experiences with a small block rebounding off a larger one. They were called names that required a massive flight of imagination and suspension of disbelief to play. Names like tennis, football and cricket.

Summer Games II

Home computers began in this frame of mind, but soon progressed with characteristic leaps and bounds with games like DECATHLON and shortly after Daley Thompson's Decathlon — two games which offered you more in one cassette — sportwise — than ten average games did. And they actually tried to introduce a sense of exertion in them as well. Joysticks clattered and snapped at the hands of crazed wagglers, propelling them through ten gruelling events one after the other.

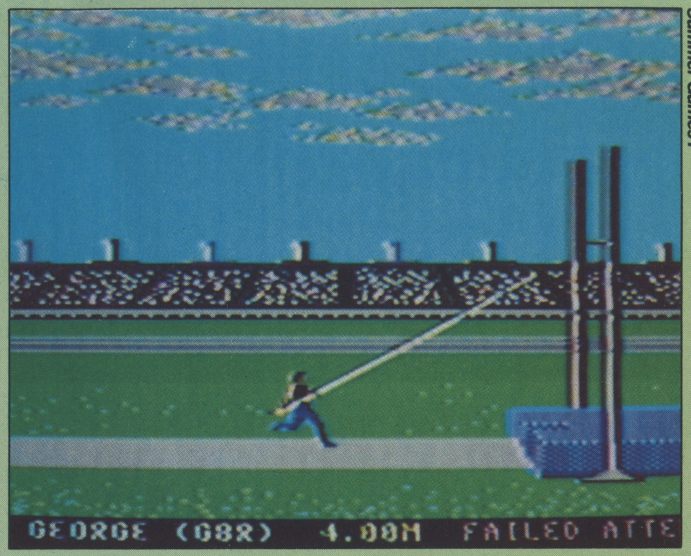
These multi-event thrashes represented the zenith of sports sims and their sales proved this. Then Epyx burst onto the scene breaking all the gaming records with a succession of classic attempts. It began with SUMMER GAMES I which immediately stood head and shoulders above the track and field. There was an added dimension in graphics and more importantly gameplay.

This impression was consolidated with the sequel SUMMER GAMES II, an outright classic. Few games of any kind touched it in terms of graphic animation, but the gameplay also offered a wealth of variation and enduring appeal. It packed so much in that other companies were asking how it was possible when they put out games which contained one event that wasn't half as good.

There was no suggestion that this was a one off when they followed it up with WINTER EVENTS. It offered everything the others had — and more. Again you were asked to use your intelligence rather than thrash the stick wildly from right to left. Only the duplication of skating events let it down.

The Epyx collections keep coming — most recently with the quirky bunch that filled WORLD GAMES. If you were told you'd actually enjoy a game that asked you to toss the caber you'd have laughed — well go on try it!

The only other really worthy attempt in this format is Ocean's HYPER-SPORTS conversion. It's not quite in the same league as the Epyx games, but few games are. Good fun nevertheless.



Summer Games I

Having exhausted the multi-event classics which firmly lodge themselves at the top of any chart, we're left with a mass of single sport simulations. Some of these are unmissable for enthusiasts and we'll run through the best ignoring miserably poor attempts at minor sports like Horse Jumping.

Football has to be high on everyone's gaming priorities and nothing has yet surpassed an old warhorse. Andrew Spencer's INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL may be a bit long in the tooth but it's head and shoulders above any cocky young upstarts like Matchday, Five-a-side Soccer (despite its penalty option) and US Gold/Artic's World Cup Socccer — all of which are second division.

Any company wishing to make a game from a sport could do a lot worse than look at Andrew Spencer's style: large (a bit fat actually) well animated sprites, easy, effective controls and simple but absorbing gameplay. When Commodore decided to manipulate International Soccer's code and turn it into a basketball game they walked all over the likes of One on One, Two on Two etc.

Access understood that when they made LEADERBOARD which along with Ariolasoft's painstakingly prepared Golf Construction Set drives other golf games to shame. Each in its own way attempts to capture the spirit of the sport and achieves a little bit more in the process. In the best sports sims you don't have to be a fan of the particular games involved to enjoy them.

You could even enjoy swinging a baseball bat when America's Accolade bring out something as sweet as HARDBALL. Naturally knocks all the other baseball games out of sight. It's a pity that when it comes to cricket sims we can't do the same thing. The best we managed with its large smoothly animated sprites was Audiogenic's Graham Gooch's Test Cricket — for which a 128 version is set to appear in '87. It just doesn't ask enough of you to enjoy it.

If there is an area crying out for a good representation on the home computer, it's with racquet sports. There's been enough, from Jonah Barrington's Squash (with digitiised voice) to table tennis. The best effort here was Imagine's Konami coin-op conversion, but even that's too easy and rather dull after a while. Tennis games are without exception all of poor quality even Commodore's. Does it take another of the big American companies to do something in this area as well? Sadly, it probably does, they seem to have grasped what a good sports sim is.

C16 AND PLUS/4

The success of the Epyx titles must turn most of the C16 companies green with envy. With the memory limitations involved you're not going to get a Summer Games on it. Wait a minute wasn't there WINTER EVENTS from Anco? Sure was. An out-an-out Screen Star which makes just about every piece of software released on this format save a couple of Gremlin's better efforts look silly. Naturally enough it was a copy of Winter Games with a few changes. A must if you don't already have it. You certainly won't want to have Tynesoft's Winter Games.

The choice unsurprisingly narrows after this. There's Imagine's World Series Baseball, which is pretty average and a version of Steve Davis Snooker. Two other multi event games do figure highly though. Old hand DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON just about made it onto the machine and more recently an improved Tynesoft's European Games.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	Summer Games II *Embodies just about everything you want from a sports sim. Total all round enjoyment.*	Epyx/US Gold	Aug 85	★
2	World Games *One year on they still keep appearing. More obscure events, but a great sense of humour.*	Epyx/US Gold	Dec 86	★
3	Winter Games *That seals up the top three. This had a couple events that were the most outstanding of anything Epyx have ever done.*	Epyx/US Gold	Nov 85	★
4	Hypersports *Six events. But not quite in the Epyx league still very playable.*	Imagine/Konami	Sept 85	★
5	International Football *Going back a bit but still unsurpassed in its grasp of the game. Bit slow.*	Commodore	Oct 83	●
6	Leaderboard *Golf Construction Set was more precise, but this was more playable. Beautiful colour and animation.*	Access/US Gold	July 85	
7	Decathlon *The best of the joystick bashers. Exhausting stuff.*	Activision	Oct 84	●
8	Hardball *Nice, neat graphic representation of baseball — a bit of an effort to hit the ball.*	Accolade	Mar 86	
9	Summer Games I *The first step for Epyx. Clearly dated in comparison to the others.*	Epyx/US Gold	Dec 84	
10	Ping Pong *As far as racquet games go it was better than most. A bit easy though.*	Imagine	April 86	

● Reviewed before screen stars were introduced but highly recommended at time.

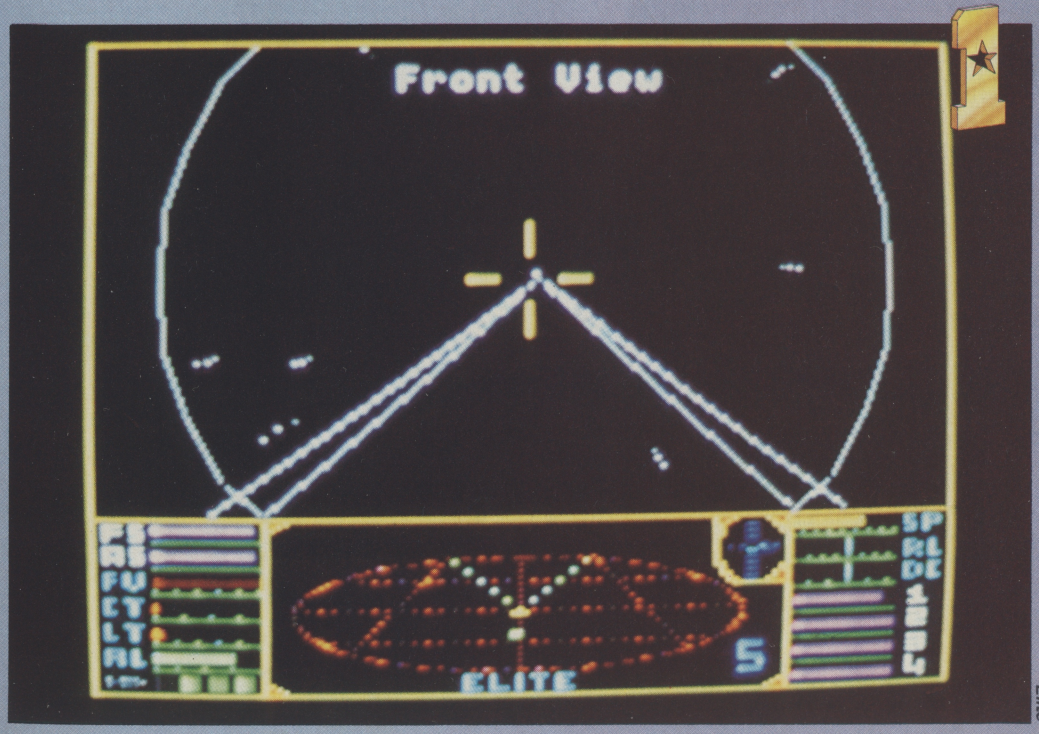
Winter Events

ARCADE ADVENTURE

This was the toughest category to narrow down. Try it yourself. I bet you can think of dozens of arcade adventures that were raved about by the reviewers. It is just about the most popular format ever.

Last year we entered a whole new era of more sophisticated gaming. The number of screens multiplied with programmers starting to out-do each other in leaps of fifty, then a hundred and so on. The graphics dazzled and the puzzles and objects to be collected became more and more sophisticated.

It looked as if arcade adventures would go on for ever — but then almost as quickly as the flood gathered momentum it petered out and coin-ops, beat 'em ups and shoot 'em ups replaced the arcade adventure as flavour of the month. Still there's one hell of a choice so large gulp, hold nose — here goes.



Elite

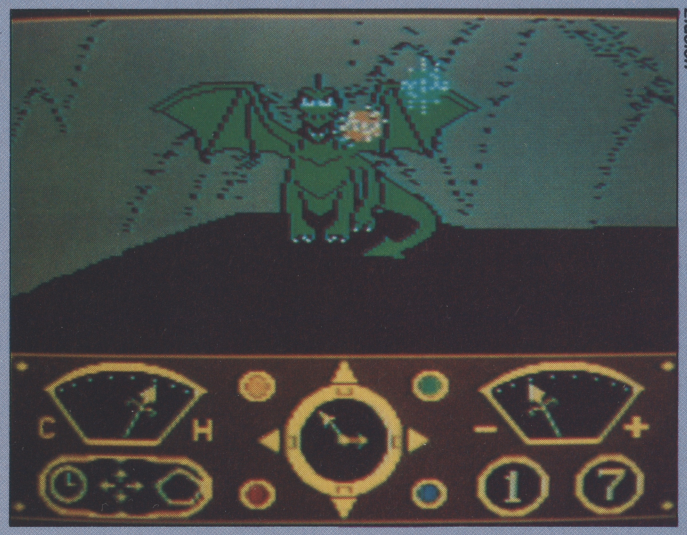
Arcade adventure purists will baulk at the idea of Elite as the best arcade adventure of all time. Their definitiion of this type of game is all to do with mapping vast areas, collecting objects and using them.

ELITE doesn't have any of these characteristics but it does create a total universe more convincing than any other game.

It is a feeling that you are actually taking part in a real adventure that sets Elite apart. Your rating becomes much more than just a game. It's serious — mind-bendingly bleary-eyed-small-hours-of-the-morning serious.

Like many great works of art Elite is a combination of several old ideas. What Braben and Bell brought to Elite themselves was the best 3D vector graphics that anyone had seen before and an attention to detail that still hasn't been bettered. Firebird threw in the best packaging money could buy, a novel, and a poster which altogether make Elite our number one arcade adventure of all time.

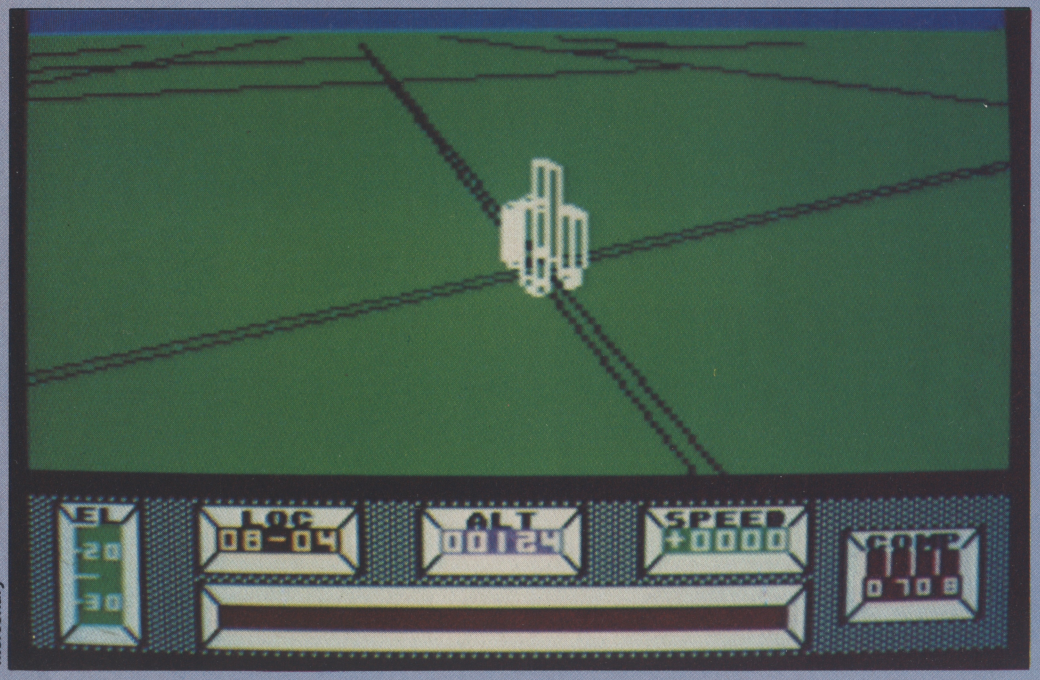
MERCENARY was almost in the number one slot. It has most of what Elite has and adds better 3D animation, challenging puzzles and that unputdownable quality that is as difficult to define and yet sets brilliant games apart from just good ones.



Eidolon

FAIRLIGHT is the best example of the map and collect game that has dominated the arcade adventure from the beginning. It is quite simply huge. If you get your kicks mapping these vast computerised lands then Fairlight is the one to go for. Graphics are superbly detailed — using two-colour line drawing.

Like our number one choice Eidolon is a winner because it allows the player to get lost in a totally believable world. Travel in a strange time ship reminiscent of HG Wells through a strange 3D world populated by weird and wonderful creatures. A tough and beautiful game.



Mercenary

Eidolon and Mercenary have ushered in a new trend in the arcade adventure — adding 3D animation. They feature so prominently in this top ten because when you play this type of game you are aware of just how dull the flat scrolling type are by comparison. This is one direction the arcade adventure can develop if it is going to compete with simple, coin-op conversions.

As the recipient of our first screen Superstar SENTINEL has to be in here. It's a unique game of skill and strategy set in a vast three dimensional cubist landscape. Chess-like in its complexity it asks one simple thing of you — remove the Sentinel. Quite stunning.

SECRET ARMOUR OF ANTIRIAD is the work of Palace Software — one of the best enduring exponents of the genre. This game is tough — witness all the maps that are appearing for it. It goes top ten because it features the best graphics and animation in any game launched this year. An arcade-adventure par-excellence.

Another choice to annoy the purists is HACKER. Sim-like in that it allows you to become a hacker saving the world. But also adventure-like because it creates a world in which the gamer can have fun. It's interesting to note that there are two Activision games in this category — Eidolon was the other — and both tell you something useful to know about this type of game — that it takes the best a games company can do to produce a good game of this type. Take Hacker, for example — it needed the best of graphics, game design, and finishing to make it hang together.

For sheer wackiness and fun the SPY VS SPY games are in a class of their own. Using booby traps to get your opponent makes the Spy games, but the appeal is that they are a head-to-head challenge and arcade adventure in their own right.

ULTIMATE can claim to have pioneered the arcade adventure on the Spectrum with games like Atic Atac, Sabre Wulf, and Knight Lore. It took a long time to launch onto the Commodore but when they did they quickly built up a huge following who bought everything they launched. The best of the Ultimate games is ENTOMBED. The hallmarks of the games are pretty graphics, tough arcade-style challenges and a complicated route.

Denton Designs introduced icon-driven controls with SHADOWFIRE — stacks of them. That now looks as if it may have been a fad but the game was good enough in its own right. Strongly developed characters and a good storyline are the things that make Shadowfire stand out from the crowd.

What have we forgotton or deliberately omitted? Well loads of things. Starquake, for example, Strangeloop, Wizadry, Cauldron the list goes on, the games mentioned are a deliberately diverse selection.

C16 AND PLUS/4

C16 and plus/4 owners have been starved of this sophisticated type of game. Programmers have so far not wanted to push the smaller Commodore's to the limits required to produce a good arcade adventure.

Of the games that have been launched the best has to be TOM THUMB — the graphics are a bit crude but it's unbeatable for depth. Otherwise you can choose from The Berk's Trilogy, which is great from CRL. XCELLOR 8 Gremlin Graphics has 64 — quality graphics and enjoyable puzzles but is the nearest thing to Elite you are going to get on your C16 Project Nova. Gremlin Graphics.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	Elite	Firebird	May 85	
	Hybrid mix of old game ideas that was nevertheless totally convincing and equally addictive.			
2	Mercenary	Novagen	Feb 86	★
	A gamers game characterised by brilliant vector graphics and the quality and complexity of the puzzles.			
3	Sentinel	Firebird	Jan 87	★
	Vast, absorbing game of breathtaking originality.			
4	Eidolon	Activision	Mar 86	
	Atmospheric graphics, superb 3D animation, and a helluva puzzle.			
5	Fairlight	The Edge	May 86	
	For mapability, finding objects and using them, and quality of puzzles nothing else comes close — though dozens and dozens have tried.			
6	Secret Armour of Antiriad	Palace	Nov 86	
	Not the toughest ever but certainly the prettiest.			
7	Hacker	Activision	Nov 86	
	Highly original blend of strategy-problem solving.			
8	Spy vs Spy II	Beyond	Aug 85	
	The Mad comic cartoon strip comes alive.			
9	Entombed	Ultimate	June 85	★
	Ultimate brought a higher class of graphics and game design to the genre. The games were easier than many of their predecessors but more playable.			
10	Shadowfire	Beyond	May 85	
	Shadowfire introduced icons and dozens of other games launched in the following six months followed suit.			

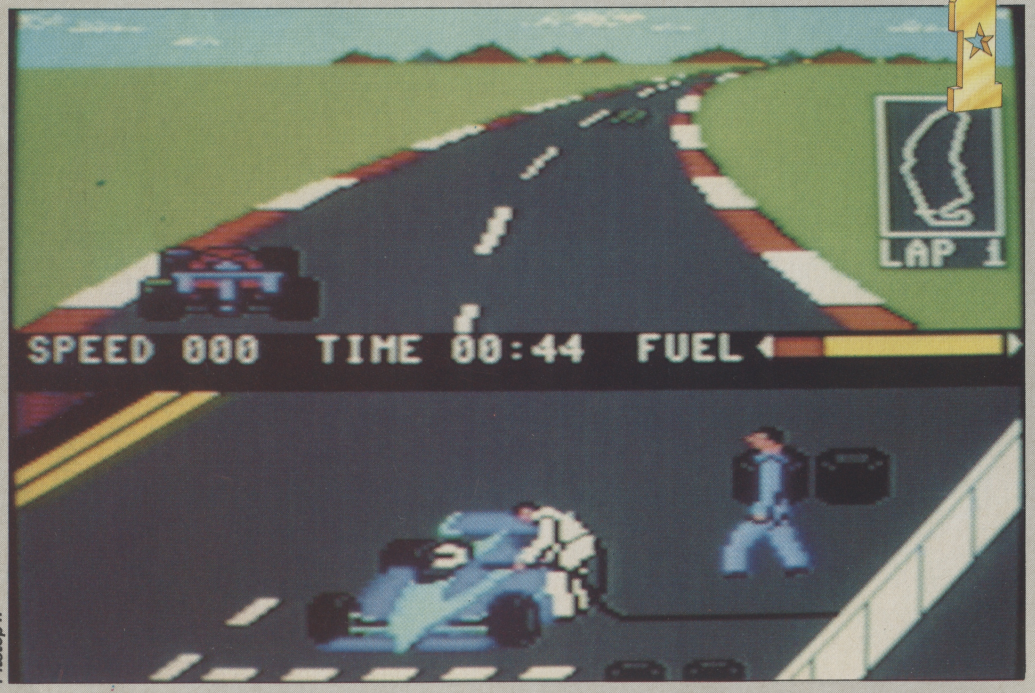
RACING SIMS

A small but highly popular category of arcade games. Considering the popularity of racing games in the arcades (Enduro Racer, TT Racer, GT etc.) it's surprising that there haven't been more conversions or original ideas. We struggled to find more than a dozen and one of those was Tour De France — the bicycle game! So helmet on, belt up and throttle hard down.

All a racing simulation has to have is a track, a head-on-view, and a strong sense of realism. Most of the versions on the market are for cars, but the few bike sims figure highly on our playlist.

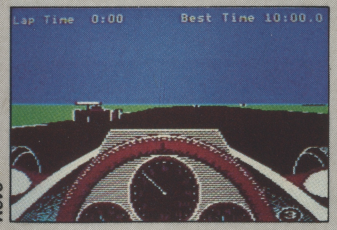
The first real game to accommodate bikers and speed freaks alike was Digital's SPEED KING currently on the market as a bargain cheapo from Mastertronic. This went unchallenged until US Gold imported the Epyx arcade conversion of Hang On, SUPER CYCLE. Complete with ten different tracks, superb banking control and eye-blinking speed it has launched itself into the top five all time racing greats. The only other possible contender was ELEKTRA GLIDE, English Software's futuristic/cult version which flopped.

Still slugging it out at the top are the old dependables. Atarisoft's POLE POSITION conversion and Epyx' (surprise) PITSTOP II. Pitstop always wins by a good lap despite, or in fact, partly because of, its tyre changes. Not only were the graphics superior and free from the glitches which occasionally allowed one car to pass through another in PP it had an added strategy element. As its name suggests you had to keep an eye on tyre wear and make crucial pitstops to change tyres. At no time did this work better than in two player mode, which with its split screen effect was exciting and original. PP has a certain sit down and drive, no frills appeal, but Pitstop is the Alain Prost of racing games.



Pitstop II

The only other possible contender is REVS, sitting there in bay 2, turbo turned right up, secure in the knowledge that it was far more a simulation than any other racing game ever produced. The cockpit view, gear transmission, and cornering effect was quite breathtaking. Other cars even appeared in your wing mirrors. Then Firebird went and added a potentiometer joystick instead of a standard one, and a potential classic was transformed into a real fiddle around on the keyboard — fingers spread all over the shop. We screamed in horror.



Revs

The only other real contenders are the two American style games. RICHARD PETTY'S TALLADEGA which was a representation of American super car racing. Great big, enormous engined hulks ripping around a banked circuit. Audiogenic's game paid its due to PP, but added a couple of nice touches, such as a slipstreaming effect where your car turned a lighter colour and you saved on fuel. Very long games involved.

If title length were a consideration Activision's THE GREAT AMERICAN CROSS COUNTRY ROAD RACE would win awards. Instead it was a bit dull. It was an attempt to capture the spirit of all those classic road movies. The backgrounds shifted through large expanses of countryside to cities and deserts and you prop your eyelids open whilst avoiding speed traps lorries and running out of gas.

SCALEXTRIC was the only other really worthy effort in this genre. Picking up the idea of constructing your own track and racing head to head with someone, just as the old kit did. Trouble is you could never get complex courses to join up! Whatever course you made didn't really seem to affect the game and the best bit was the race — a kind of two player PP.

It seems likely that if more racing games appear they'll be as a result of arcade conversions — the standard of which gets better and better. Games in the arcades attempt to cocoon you in their sound and visual experience by putting you inside a shell when you play and giving you more than one screen view just as TX 1 does.

C16 AND PLUS/4

Well, it has to be said that there is something of a paucity of racing sims for these machines. In fact we thought of two.

DEATH RACE 16 is more a camera eye view that a typical cockpit job. It's biggest problem is that when overtaking you have no sense of catching them, but rather of them catching you space invaders. Disappointing.

Mastertronic's FORMULA ONE SIMULATOR is something of an improvement on that effort. The courses though are boring and the opposition more likely to force you into an error by their own lack of speed.

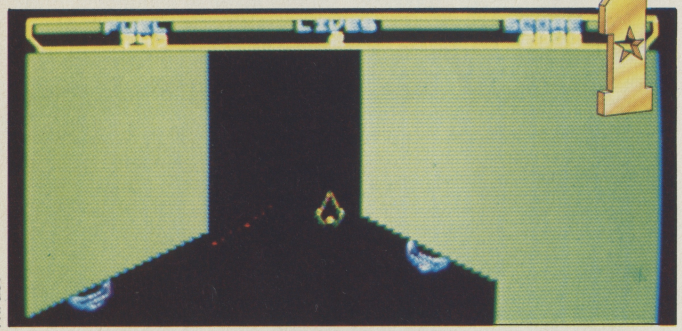
That's a pretty poor state of affairs really some of the software houses are capable of much more.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	Pitstop II *After all this time it's still got everything and more. Head-to head, strategy, tyre changes the lot.*	Epyx/US Gold	May 85	*
2	Revs *The best ouright sim — spoiled by fiddley joystick controls/keyboard. Shame.*	Firebird	Jan 86	
3	Super Cycle *The bike game for the 64, neat banking and background graphics. Well fast.*	US Gold/Epyx	Oct 86	
4	Pole Position *Still a very playable game — keep logging big scores as long as the bonuses last.*	US Gold	May 85	
5	Speed King *Unseated as bike champ by Super Cycle, neat banking but has awkward gearing.*	Digital/Master	Sept 85	
6	Richard Petty's Talladega *Americanised again. Super cars careering round a circuit, some nice ideas, but very long-winded.*	Audiogenic	June 85	
7	Great American Cross Country Road Race *Different approach to racing sims. More of a road game but not as playable as it might have been.*	Activision	Sept 85	
8	Scalextric *No new ideas really but well executed. The track building was superflous.*	Leisure Genius	Feb 86	
9	Elektra Guide *Eagerly awaited flop. Nice scenery but unresponsive and frustrating.*	English Software	April 86	
10	Turbo 64 *Early 3D effort ruined by stupid security lock.*	Micropower	Feb 85	

CHEAPO

Cheapos were without exception naff at first and all the magazines gave them a universal thumbs down. One company changed all that — Mastertronic. They started producing reasonable quality games at pocket money prices and a budget boom was ushered in. Now there are half-a-dozen companies producing superb games some of them re-released full price titles for under £3.00. At ten pounds a game the cheapos were bound to be attractive — so attractive that some companies wanted them excluded from the charts.

CU was quick to respond to the budget boom with our Cheapo-of-the-Month accolade. Here are the games that received the award and some other not-to-be-missed budget bargains.



Thrust

If it were full price THRUST would come recommended, but at two quid it's a delight. Inspired by the arcade game Gravitar — this budget price coin-op conversion is hellishly addictive. Gently tweeking the controls makes your ship float forward. An incredible feeling of floating, momentum and inertia.

If you fancy a super fast shoot 'em up with metallic bas-relief graphics WARHAWK is the boy. A bit like a vertically scrolling Uridium. Features frenetic short burst firing where your laser becomes super-charged.

As sports sims come GO FOR GOLD isn't quite in the Epyx League but this was once a full price game. Evidence of the dozens of excellent games in the US Gold back catalogue that are starting to appear as cheapos.

This scrolling car-race game THE LAST V8 was best known for its impressive car dash which took up about two thirds of the screen.

180 is not just remarkable because of the glorious digitised speech — it really brings the pub game home to the 64.

SENTINEL never got the recognition it deserved — either as a full price game, or later, as an Americana Cheapo. It's a sort of Star Wars 3D shoot 'em up. It also features galactic maps and sophisticated flight controls.

The ghost of Ultimate loomed up in CYLU — an arcade adventure which rivalled many a full price game when it was launched. Beautifully detailed — two colour animation.

It was BOOTY that put Firebird on the map as a Cheapo manufacturer. It's interesting to note that they have four games in the top ten. Their Cheapos do seem to be getting better all the time but so are everybody's.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	CHEAPO OF THE MONTH
1	Thrust	Firebird	May 86	✓
2	Warhawk	Firebird	Nov 86	✓
3	Go For Gold	US Gold/Americana	Nov 86	✓
4	The Last V8	Mastertronic Mad Games	Jan 86	
5	180	Mastertronic	Dec 86	✓
6	Sentinel	US Gold/Americana	June 86	✓
7	Cylu	Firebird	Sept 85	
8	Booty	Firebird	Oct 84	
9	Master of Magic	Mastertronic	March 86	
10	Kikstart	Mastertronic	May 85	

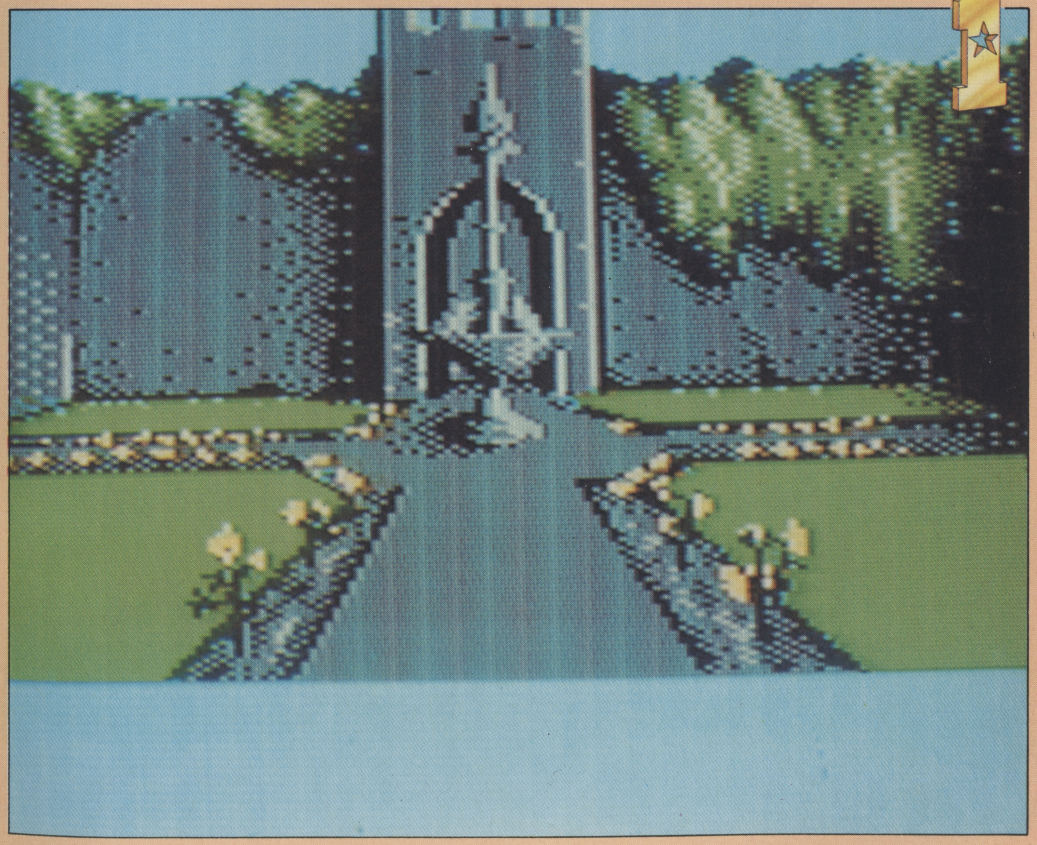
ADVENTURES

The best adventures are so absorbing, so compelling, so devious, and such fun, that you just can't stop playing them. When I play an adventure I look for these reactions, but I also take into consideration excellence in programming, credibility of plot and problems, and above all — humour. One thing I can't stand is an adventure that takes itself ever so seriously!

Within these constraints I have tried to bring you a variety that would grace any ordinary desert island, given a power supply suitable for a Commodore 64, together with screen and disk drive.

I'm beginning with the top the state-of-the-art adventure, written for the latest generation of hardware, the PAWN. It proves that with excellence of programming, what the 16-bit machines can do, so can the good old 8-bit Commodore 64. Roller blind graphics, complex parser, huge vocabulary.

In his quest the player comes up against problem after devious problem These are so many and varied, and so interlocked, that The Pawn has a long



playing life. It can be 'dipped into,' saved with a few more points, and returned to, again and again.

The Pawn is now the standard by which all adventures will be judged, but will not keep its No. 1 position for long. Who can doubt or hope that Magnetic Scrolls will come up with something bigger and better, with even more startling features, in the not-too-distant future?

Naturally there has to be an Infocom game and an ideal introduction is WISHBRINGER. A (long) weekend's work to solve only, it is full of humour, and quite obvious that the author knows what you're up to at any given time. It is also dramatic and sinister in places.

As the post boy in the tranquil village of Festeron, a simple job of delivering a letter to the Magicke Shoppe on the hill, has results you hadn't bargained for. On your return, everything has changed. The atmosphere is heavily threatening, yet somehow vaguely familiar.

As a bonus, you not only get a glow-in-the-dark Wishbringer stone, but a unique chance to view a Grue's nest — from the inside!

Yet to be reviewed in The Valley (see the next issue!) KAYLETH has a meaningful and detailed picture held in memory for each of the game's 92 locations. These are displayed instantly, and many are astonishingly animated. Add to that a multi-word parser, QSAVE and QLOAD (RAM) commands, and a BOM (Back One Move) command, and this has now to be the most technically advanced adventure yet to be produced on cassette.

But that alone does not guarantee an enjoyable game. Kayleth has plenty of devious puzzles, and no shortage of wit — much of which will have you at your wit's end! In this sci-fi story, you are a programmable droid aboard a spaceship, and must escape, to seek out and kill the enemy — Kayleth!

Probably the cleverest adventure ever written is the SORCEROR OF CLAYMORGUE CASTLE simply collecting and storing thirteen stars is the objective. But the stars are only the motivation to solving the secrets of the castles, by using a number of mysterious spells, properties unknown.

Discovering how each one works is up to the player. But sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't, and sometimes you've no idea why!

There is more than one solution to most problems, but only one correct way to complete the game. By solving a problem the 'wrong' way, you'll find you haven't the means to solve one further on. And of course, the game is designed in such a way, that it's the wrong ideas that come to you first!

The first adventure I ever played was ADVENTURELAND (back in 1980) and it got me hooked. I still return to it now and again, as one would to a good book, to see how quickly I can get hold of those thirteen treasures.

I thrill to the journey down through the tree stump, the struggle with the bees, the properties of mud, and the eventual dramatic awakening of the dragon! The terse text adds to the cryptic mystery of the puzzles. The HELP messages are designed for the beginner (EVERYONE was a beginner when this game first turned up!) but you have to work on them!

In the good old days when Level 9 produced text-only adventures, SNOWBALL, a sci-fi drama about a deep-space trip to colonise Eridani A, claimed 7000 locations. Aboard a frozen-ammonia-powered spacecraft, where all the crew members are in deep cryogenic sleep, you, Kim Kimberley, awake. Something has gone wrong...

The text conveys a suspenseful atmosphere, producing mental images far more powerfully than graphics. Kim Kimberley went on to star in two more adventures now collected as the Silicon Dream Trilogy, this time with graphics: Return To Eden, and Worm In Paradise, but they never came up to the level of Snowball.

Tame, suggestive, and lewd, the incentive to solve the problems is not only through increasing your score, but through scoring in Infocom's LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS — If you see what I mean!

Snatched out of a dismal bar by the Leather Goddesses, you are transported to Phobos, and cast in a cell with nothing but a scanty brass loincloth (or bikini) to cover your private parts. An encounter with a gorilla of the opposite sex in the confines of a locked cage, a sultan who holds out the promise of the freedom of his harem, and a revolting frog, are among the more interesting situations in which you find yourself.

For nonsense adventures, TASS TIMES is a zany romp into another dimension to visit Tonetown. With a hip language all of its own, you must become with-it, or 'tass,' Towntown style, or die at the hands of arch-villain and property tycoon, Franklin Snarl.

Learn to dress and act as the locals, or you'll be spotted as a tourist. You may feel a bit of a looney, but they hate tourists in Tonetown!

Cleverly animated graphics, sound effects, and some wonderfully catchy music (real tass), make this an adventure that will keep you entertained all the way.

As far as text-only games to be found on cassette go, MORDON'S QUEST is the biggest, your job is to find the parts of a machine. You'll travel from the depths of the ocean to the gladiator's ring in ancient Rome, but first you'll have to deal with a pygmy cannibal intent on stewing his mother, and a very hungry plant.

My favourite among the Mysterious Adventures is CIRCUS. Out of petrol, your car stops in a remote spot. There is a strangely quiet circus tent in a field nearby. Inside it is deserted, save for the fleeting figure of a clown.

You can test your skill on the trapeze or the tightrope, your courage as a tiger tamer, and see what it feels like to be shot from a cannon. But will these help you to fill your empty petrol can?

Tass Times

C 16 AND PLUS/4

Though the C16 has a limited memory and the Plus/4 has little software developed directly for it there are some adventures for these machines. Several Brian Howarth mysteries are available including Circus, though you might have some difficulty obtaining them. Some of the Scott Adams classics have appeared as well including the highly praised Sorceror of Claymorgue Castle.

POS	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	WHEN REVIEWED	SCREEN STAR?
1	The Pawn	Magnetic Scrolls/ Rainbird	Nov 86	*
	The game that finally ended the debate over graphics Vs text only. It proved you could have the best pictures and the best parser in the same game.			
2	Wishbringer	Infocom	Oct 85	
	The American masters at their best. Atmospheric New England is the setting for this tale. Beautifully presented and totally absorbing.			
3	Kayleth	US Gold/ Adventuresoft	Feb 87	
	This new release combined with the Pawn is evidence that the adventure game is undergoing a period of rapid improvement.			
4	Sorceror of Claymorgue Castle	Adventure International	n/a	
	From the early pioneer of adventure games — eccentric Scott Adams. The man at his best.			
5	Adventureland	Adventure International	n/a	
	One of Scott Adams first games and also the game on adventuring.			
6	Snowball	Level 9/Rainbird	n/a	
	Incredibly tough deep space adventure made Level 9's name for them.			
7	Leather Goddesses of Phobos	Infocom	Oct 85	
	This naughty but nice adventure by Steve Meretsky has got to have the weirdest title ever. It's tough, titilating and totally unique.			
8	Tass Times	Activision	Dec 86	
	If Leather Goddesses was the sexiest this has got to be the trendiest.			
9	Mordon's Quest	Melbourne House	Sept 85	
	Massive universal hunt without pictures. Tough and absorbing.			
10	Circus	Adventuresoft	Aug 84	